National Fire Plan

2004 Annual Awards

Biomass Innovation: Montana Partners

Pushing the Limits of Biomass Innovation in Montana Communities: The following projects exemplify one of the goals of the National Fire Plan 10-year Comprehensive Strategy, which is to "employ all appropriate means to stimulate industries that will utilize small diameter woody material resulting from hazardous fuel reduction activities."

Each project is helping to promote and expand the market for small-diameter roundwood and provides an economic incentive for woody biomass removal from overgrown forest stands throughout the West. Some projects are a "first-of-its-kind" use for woody biomass, such as the structural roundwood trusses used in the Darby Library and the roundwood pedestrian bridge at the Lewis & Clark historical site.

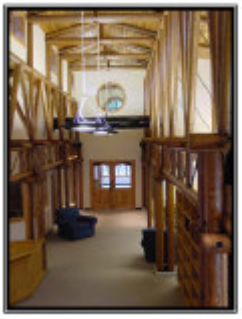
These innovative projects were accomplished financially by National Fire Plan funding and technologically by a core of dedicated Forest Service employees, community members, an economic development organization, small businesses, and a Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Council.

Kiosk at Lewis & Clark's Campsite: Travelers' Rest State Park marks the location of the Native American campsite that Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery used in 1805 and 1806. A 24-foot diameter roundwood kiosk (2004) was the first step in overall construction at the park, providing protection from the elements for visitors, school groups, and programs.

Plans for the park include the establishment of areas telling the story of the Lewis & Clark Expedition, the Native American presence, the experiences of the pioneer homesteads, and the natural history of the area. As a direct result of the engineered kiosk project, the Travelers' Rest Heritage Association plans to utilize small-diameter timber throughout the development of the park.

Bridging Cultures and Time: Also at the site, a 165-foot suspension roundwood pedestrian bridge with a main span of 110 feet is being constructed (2004-2005) across the creek from the campsite to minimize environmental damage and to connect the parking lot to the historical areas. The superstructure is being built primarily of 6-inch diameter lodgepole pine salvaged from beetle-killed stands on the Bitterroot National Forest.

Darby Community Library: The new Darby 5,000 square foot library is truly an inspiring national demonstration project. It showcases innovative technology by using engineered beams and trusses made from small diameter roundwood material thinned or fire-killed from the nearby Bitterroot National Forest. The structure includes small logs as trusses, columns, and parallel cords. Small-diameter roundwood logs are visible under the eaves and throughout the interior. The ceiling is made of underutilized blue-stain pine.



This library was built using local contractors and suppliers, incorporating as many locally-made supplies as possible. The nearly $900,000 building opened debt-free in September 2004 as a result of Forest Service grants, numerous fundraisers, and donations from businesses and organizations throughout the area.

The new Darby library truly reflects the spirit and culture of this community.

Partners: S&PF Technology Marketing Unit, S&PF Cooperative Forestry Region 1, Bitterroot National Forest, Montana Community Development Corporation, Porterbilt Company, Inc., Bitterroot RC&D Council, Beaudette Consulting Engineers, David Green, Forest Products Laboratory, Friends of the Darby Library, Ron LaRue, Architect, and Travelers' Rest Preservation and Heritage Association.